

Book of Wisdom – Ishopanishad

By Swami Rama Courtesy & copyright Himalayan International Institute, Pennsylvania

Friends this is another super book by Swami Rama. I am grateful to Shakunji for introducing me to the institute. If you like to buy their books mail Payal Sehgal at hidelhi@himalayaninstitute.org. Content is verbatim from the book. Have taken relevant excerpts to make the piece comprehensive. The chapters are -

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Introduction

Chapter 1

The Ishopanishad, one of the shortest of the Upanishads, is also one of the most profound. Like other great texts of the Vedic tradition, the Ishopanishad is an integrated and comprehensive treatment of spirituality, psychology, epistemology and practical guidance for personal and social improvement. It contains not only an explanation of cosmic and personal consciousness, illusion and reality, ignorance and knowledge, but it also concerns itself with the practical application of spirituality and the preparation for one's final journey. In this discussion of the Ishopanishad by Swami Rama, we come to understand that there is a necessary compatibility between the spiritual and the practical in life.

Written in the philosophical and poetic imagery of the ancient tradition, the Ishopanishad is often quite difficult for Westerners to understand, but in this commentary, Swami Rama has brilliantly illuminated the profound insights it contains. A master yogi in along line of eminent teachers and rishis, Swami Rama is also a spiritual successor to the great Shankaracharya, India's greatest philosopher and yogi. Selected to continue in this spiritual leadership carefully handed down through the ages, Swami Rama holds the position of spiritual leader. Since 1969 Swami Rama has been teaching in the United States. He is the founder and spiritual leader of the Himalayan Institute which is located in Honesdale, Pennsylvania and has many branches throughout the United States and other parts of the world. under his guidance, the Institute has developed a holistic therapy program, a graduate school offering a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in Yoga Psychology and philosophy, and research and training programs in Yoga science. The Institute also

publishers its own books and supports yearly international conferences on Yoga science and meditation. Eschewing any personal following, Swami Rama works quietly to bring the spiritual wisdom of the East to full understanding and harmony in the West. For this spiritual leader, who is also a scientist and a philosopher, there is no separation between the universal truths of religion and science.

Swami Rama's approach to the Ishopanishad is clear, universal and practical. In the first chapters he points out that despite our material wealth and technology, we have still not achieved peace within ourselves or within our societies. He shows that the solution to our problems lies in the recognition and experience of the inner self, and in establishing harmony with this inner self, nature and society. Then follows a translation of and commentary on the Ishopanishad which provides an unequivocal and concrete illustration of the value of the Upanishads to modern man. Needless to say, such commentaries as these are both rare and essential, especially for Westerners. The Western mind, unfamiliar as it is with Eastern philosophies and worldviews, needs assistance in understanding the writings of a more ancient and distant milieu. This assistance is ably provided by Swami Rama as he demonstrates the everyday practicality of the profound truths found in this ancient text.

For example, mantras twelve-through fourteen of the Ishopanishad are concerned with the highly abstract subject of the differences between the manifest and un-manifest universe. Swami Rama clearly describes the relationship between these two universal principles by comparing them with the relationship between the individual and the cosmos. He also shows that true knowledge is beyond mere academics or logic.

Swami Rama explains several practical methods to start one on the path to the final goal of life-conscious union of the personal with the universal. He demonstrates the practical relationship between the abstract cosmology and everyday life and describes the spiritual practices of yoga, which are the means by which this union can occur.

Whether he is discussing man's relationship with death, the nature of human suffering, or the development of wisdom, Swami Rama constantly clarifies the relationship between the theoretical and the practical, and constantly holds up for our examination the insights gained through deep spiritual practice by the ancient sages. We can ourselves begin to see how one of the shortest Upanishads is a wellspring of ageless wisdom, providing both the spiritual metaphysical scheme for understanding the human condition and at the same time providing the practical methods for solving our personal and social problems. As Swami Rama points out, our suffering is a direct result of our ignorance of this inner self, and until we achieve conscious awareness of this self, until we recognize God within, we will continue to create suffering for ourselves. Becoming and remaining conscious of the divine spirit within and becoming non-attached to the world, leads to the realization of universal truth and the resolution of the "partial horror" of the human condition. In his first letter, St. John reminds his fellow Christians that they can overcome adversity and false knowledge because "you are from God and you have in you One who is greater than anyone in this world." In all great religious truths, there appears the one universal truth of God within as the source of all power and wisdom. In his remarkable vision and

understanding, Swami Rama leads the readers to see that “we have only to become human; we already are God.”

Search for Life

Chapter 2

Between two end points called birth and death, is a span we call life. But in reality, this span forms only a small fraction of our life. The totality of life is hidden beyond the points we call birth and death. Due to ignorance we take this small portion of life before us to be the whole of life. But it is not so.

This life is like an iceberg apparently floating on the surface of an ocean. A very small portion of this huge icy rock is visible to the eye. A far greater portion is concealed beneath the surface. From a distance it appears as if small piece of ice were floating on the surface; but a close and careful examination reveals that it is only a fraction of the whole. This small portion is the manifested and exposed portion. By far the greatest portion of the iceberg is hidden in the depths of the unknown. It is exactly the same with our life. Between birth and death there is only a very small known and manifested fraction of the totality of life. An infinitely larger portion is hidden in the unknown and the unmanifested. Our real Self is not confined to the manifested alone. We are not so small and insignificant. A thoughtful study helps us to realize that life is a grand thing, though we have forgotten its greater part. Knowledge of the manifested part of life alone cannot give us an understanding of the totality of life and the secrets of birth. Therefore we must also know the unmanifested part of life. When we gain knowledge of this unknown, many of our problems are solved and our queries satisfied.

The world to which we have come is only a stage in the journey of the larger life, before birth and after death. The object of a traveler cannot be achieved by sticking fast to any one stage of his journey. **It is only moving forward that results in evolution.** We will have to move forward. To move forward means to make progress. One whose march is obstructed, or one who stops on the way, fails in his development. This is the law. Here in this world we are as a sojourner, a guest who is entitled only to world we are as a sojourner, a guest who is entitled only to stay awhile in the guesthouse. Is it not so? We come and then depart. Whenever a wise man stays in a guesthouse, he does not develop any attachment to the walls and other things of the house because he knows these things do not belong to him. If anyone acts otherwise, he cannot reach the end of his journey successfully. The source of endless troubles and obstructions on our journey is this attachment which we develop to our friends relatives and co-workers.

An attitude of indifference and laxity towards the purpose of life is ruinous. We should always carefully refrain from such an attitude. Friends, my words may be unpleasant to you, but I will never give a coating of sweet words to this stern truth. How long can we beguile ourselves by turning away from the truth of life? Everyone, therefore, should be vigilant about the aim of life. It will be an auspicious day for man when he cultivates eagerness to achieve the objects of his life. The man who remains faithful to his object belongs to the divine category of men. Such a man finds himself in the company of elevated human beings much above the mass of common humanity. All this is possible

and can be experienced in this very life. Realizing one's present imperfection is the first sign of gaining knowledge. In our present condition we are imperfect. But it is also true that we can attain perfection in this life. The great men of the world bear witness to it. Taking birth in the midst of common human society, they made themselves great in this very world. Let us follow the path shown by them and liberate ourselves. The real dharma (norm) for man is to be free from all sufferings. All other duties ought to supplement this dharma alone.

In whatever circumstances you are, live as a sadhaka (devotee or spiritual seeker). There things are absolutely necessary to be a spiritual seeker: first, to be ever wakeful and persistent in realizing one's aim; second, to be careful about the right use of time; third to make the right use of every situation and circumstance in life. The whole world and its objects can come within the scope of our spiritual practice.

Our scriptures, Upanishads and sacred books have been teaching two ways of sadhana, namely the way of self-denial and the way of action. But in the present age both these ways seem to reach extremes in practice. The Upanishads declare that you can realize perfect bliss, reaching the highest peak of life, through the middle path, the path of tranquility, equilibrium, and harmonious balance. You should neither be completely lost in the world nor should you run away from it. The wisdom of the Upanishads (Brahmavidya) can prove useful and appropriate for the modern age. The wisest saying of the Ishopanishad, **“tena tyaktena bhunjitha”** gives us the key for gaining triumph in this world and in this life. It **means that the things of this world can be most enjoyed in an attitude of perfect non-attachment.**

Mind and Sadhana

Chapter 3

The process in which the aspirant unfolds, develops, and enlightens himself is called sadhana. Sadhana is that practice which has the power to carry the seeker (sadhaka) to his objective. Our object is to realize the truth of life. We have to bring about our maximum development and arouse and express the power lying dormant within us. It is possible through sadhana alone. Life itself should be sadhana. We can achieve the object of life if our mind, body and everything else we call our own, becomes sadhana or a means of attaining our goal. Our object is to attain absolute peace, an unalloyed happiness or perennials bliss; and this is possible only when we use all circumstances in life, whether good or bad, happy or painful, to promote our sadhana. All circumstances in life cannot be made to suit us, but continuous sadhana makes us feel that the condition which is hostile to us at present is in fact an opportunity for advancement on the path. Sadhana leads to concentration, and concentration leads in turn to realization. When a sadhaka tastes the bliss of realization, all his doubts are resolved and only then absolutely unshakable faith takes root in his heart. Without sadhana and Self-realization, the mind is reluctant to believe what is merely heard or read in the great scriptures and the saying of the sages.

To start sadhana one must shun all weakness and create maximum inner strength. The sadhaka should never allow the animal tendencies to obstruct his path. The first duty of man is to develop in himself the human qualities and to be a true humanitarian. He should never allow the destructive aspect of animality to enter his heart, or his thought, speech, or action. Purity is gained by refraining from the easy path of falsehood, vice, and vicious activity. Sadhana is required to free us completely from such evils, and the resultant purification carries us to the threshold of salvation. As purification advances, power increases. When power increases, wisdom dawns, and wisdom is accompanied by bliss divine.

That which separates the sadhaka from his goal is impurity and the ignorance of his mind and heart. The aim of sadhana is to make the heart and mind pure and enlightened. The experience of Self-illumination is possible only in a pure heart and mind, and there are various methods of sadhana for the purpose of purification. To speak of realization without sadhana is only empty talk, a mere reflection of ego. By the constant practice of self-purification the ego is gradually dissolved and ceases to govern one's life.

In the sacred books of East and West the antah-karana, or inner being of man, has been described at length. In Western philosophies, owing to lack of adequate knowledge of sadhana (discipline), it has not been analyzed properly. But our sages (Rishis) have given a very beautiful description of it on the basis of their personal experience. The Upanishads and other books of wisdom have dwelt upon various forms of mind and emphasized its strict control. In Yoga philosophy the system of sadhana for controlling mind, intellect and ego by merging them into consciousness (cit) and its attributes has been scientifically elaborated. Antahkarana means that which works within. Just as we have first senses for the perception of gross manifestation, so we have other, subtler functions working within. The **four functions of the antahkarana** are mind (manas), intellect (buddhi), consciousness (citta), and ego (ahamkara). Manas is that which questions whether we should do a certain thing; it is the doubting function. Buddhi (intellect) is the function which classifies, discriminates, and decides that we should do a certain thing. Citta is a storehouse of subconscious impression from past experience, and comes into play when for example, we begin to brood and enlarge the sphere of resolves and counter-resolves. The ahamkara (ego) is what gives our consciousness a feeling of "I" and "mine."

Mind is like an employer of this body-whose function is to carry external impressions through sense perception. Mind is an outstanding instrument without which no sadhana is possible.

Some of the **primary rules of sadhana** are as follows:

1. At a fixed time in the serenity of morning and evening, the sadhaka should daily sit silently in some quiet place. The greater the solitude, peacefulness and purity of the place, the greater the concentration of mind.

2. Any asana (posture) which provides a steady and comfortable position should be used daily for practice at the appointed time.
3. The seat should be comfortable and not be hard ground. If one sits cross-legged, a cushion or folded blanket may be used. Otherwise, one may sit in a straight backed chair.
4. The head, neck and trunk should be aligned.
5. The anus should be contracted (mula-lock) and held contracted during the meditation.
6. Calmly, smoothly and slowly the sadhaka should exhale. There should be no jerkiness or sound either in inhaling or exhaling. The body should remain unmoved and relaxed.
7. Eyelids should not be strained or tensed as to affect the eyes.
8. The practice should be carried on daily at a fixed time and place with a definite method of concentration. The carefully selected method should not be changed.
9. The first resolve should be that no external thought will be allowed to enter the mind. Next, effort should be made to stop the activity of mind. The mind should not be allowed to ruminate over any idea or object. After a period of such practice, Pranava (Om) or some other mantra should be repeated. This fills the mind with an ecstasy of its spirit. The mind should be repeatedly brought to concentrate on the meaning and spirit of the mantra. Some mantras are useless, either because they are so difficult that they make the breathing irregular or because the student does not understand the meaning.
10. The mantra should not be repeated without understanding its meaning. Before repeating the mantra, the student should be fully convinced of its importance. It should be repeated with meaning and feeling. Parrot-like repetition is not of much use.
11. Repeating the mantra merely with the rosary and the tongue is a very inferior sadhana. It won't do merely to complete a given count. The purpose of japa, or repetition of the mantra is to lead the mind to the higher dimensions and to rungs of meditation.
12. Eventually, the mantra becomes a part and parcel of life which infuses awareness at all times. The meaning and spirit of the mantra should so intertwine with every incoming and out-going breath that, in whatever circumstances the sadhaka might be, he is always conscious of it. as the mind grows one-pointed by thus uttering the mantra and concentrating on it, interest in sadhana also deepens. **When japa is thus carried on in the midst of worldly activities, it is called meditation in action.**
13. The period of practice should be gradually increased but the mind and body should not be fatigued.

14. In one's external life, those deeds which are not helpful in the path of progress will become evident and can be discarded. Energy should not be wasted unnecessarily. The cause of hindrance should be watched carefully and eliminated with sincere effort. Truthfulness, sincerity, faithfulness and one-pointed devotion are helpful.

15. Eliminating profane thoughts leads to a purified mind. It is the purified and one-pointed mind of the sadhaka that offers him the fragrant flower of joy in his concentration. When the mind is one-pointed and stable, peace is definitely experienced within and without. This experience is the foundation of faith.

Concentration and control of mind are essential for progress in every walk of life. Just as we perform certain duties in daily life, concentration of mind is also one of the necessities. So every thoughtful person for the sake of a fully developed and concentrated mind must adopt a system of sadhana. Indolence and laxity are great obstacles in the path of enlightenment. Sadhana is enhanced by a well-regulated life, and by moderation of diet and the pursuit of pleasure. Thoughts are strengthened by study and the company of wise and saintly persons. Then the vine of sadhana blossoms and fructifies. Tireless and ceaseless labor is the splendor of life. Everything is possible with constant and sincere practice. By practice we can awaken our true nature, bringing it out from the depth of forgetfulness and can enjoy and give expression to the feeling of bliss in every direction of life. The life of sadhana is the only true life.

Upanishads and Vedanta

Chapter 4

The Vedas, which are the fountainhead of all Indian philosophical tradition and spiritual practice, are divided into **two parts: Mantra and Brahmana**. The Mantra section is primary and the Brahmana section has been appended as the interpretation and elaboration of the mantras. The Brahmana section has three subdivisions: (1) the Brahmanas; (2) the Aranyakas; and (3) the Upanishads. The Brahmana subdivision gives, in detail, the methods and objects of the performance of various functions such as sacrifices (yajna). The Aranyaka subdivision describes different forms of the worship of God, or spiritual exercises. The Upanishads subdivision asserts that what is at the root of the universe and of ourselves is one identical principle. To merge one's consciousness with that ultimate principle is the highest goal, the crowning victory of life.

According to the Amarakosha dictionary, the term Upanishad is used in the sense of religion with a deeper import and mystery. According to Shankara and other Eastern commentators, the term Upanishad has three senses: that which destroys the ignorance of the individual soul; that which guides the seeker toward the highest; and that which loosens our attachment to the material world and to our perishable physical self. According to Mukti-Upanishad, the number of Upanishads available is above one hundred. Although the authenticity of all the Upanishads is universally recognized, scholars most often quote eleven Upanishads, which are also the most widely read, studied, and preached. Shankaracharya and other masters have given commentaries, each good from its own viewpoint, on these Upanishads. One annotation called the

Brahmasutras, with further commentary by the first Shankaracharya, is considered especially fine.

The Upanishads are also known as Vedanta, or the culmination of the Vedas. The Upanishads the Brahmasutras, with a further development in the form of the Gita constitute the Prasthanatrayi, the basic texts of Vedanta philosophy. The term Vedanta also means the end of all knowledge, for we might say that nothing remains to be known after acquiring the knowledge spoken of in the Upanishads. The knowledge of the sacred is called Brahman, and is referred to by various other names such as the Upanishads, Adhyatma, Amrita, and so forth. This knowledge extinguishes all illusory experience and procures for one the highest truth. Through Brahman one is able to realize Brahman, which is changeless and inaccessible to speech, senses, mind, intellect, and ego; this is wisdom, the experience of an ocean of pure blissful consciousness.

This sacred knowledge of Brahman is the life breath of Indian philosophy and religion. If we should exclude Upanishadic philosophy from Indian tradition, its philosophical and religious books would become lifeless. Indian culture, civilization and literature are unique, being based on the realization of truth granted to the pure awareness of the rishis. Upanishadic philosophy is a succinct expression of the highest truth of all, the supra-conscious knowledge of the Vedas. It is a lamp of knowledge which has been dispersing light for centuries. There is such light in this supreme knowledge that it has rendered India foremost among nations in spiritual philosophy. And the truth-realization of the rishis is existent, in some form or other, in the life of every Indian.

Scholars of other countries and religions have also recognized the wisdom of the Upanishads. The first to come to India was the Arab scholar, Alberuni, who translated the Gita into Arabic. Dara Shikoh, eldest son of the Moghal Emperor Shahjahan, had the Gita translated into Persian. This Moslem prince had also organized a Vedanta Sammelan and invited the great scholars of Benares to participate. Many of the great Islamic fakirs and saints have also revered the principles of the Upanishads. Not only this, but Sufis like Mansoor, Shariat, Faizi, Bullashah, etc., refused to renounce these principles even at the cost of their lives. Among the Western philosophers, Max Muller, Schopenhauer, Gold, Dawson, McDonald, Victor Cousin, Frederick Gale, etc., have said that Western philosophy must bow to Eastern wisdom. Schopenhauer went so far as to say in his famous 19th century book that it is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people of the world.

The rishis have declared that this world, at root or in essence, is one. There is only one power that appears before us in various forms and names. All existence is dependent on the One. That imperishable and changeless essence or power throws its own light through the various forms and names of the world. All are born out of the same power and in the end return to the same power again. **There is no independent existence except the one supreme essence.** This is the first truth of the Upanishads. In our thinking there is a distinction between the animate and the inanimate, the sentient and the insentient, but the inanimate and the insentient have no existence of their own, independent of the One. Thus their underlying real nature is no different from the animate and sentient, as they all

spring from the same One. This is the second truth of the Upanishads. All objects are finite and perishable. The infinite never appears before the senses. The senses are subordinate to the mind. Observing the world to be full of incongruities, the mind and the senses are capable of acquiring only incomplete and limited knowledge.

The philosophy of the Vedanta and Upanishads, by discriminating between the everlasting and the transient, gives a vision of the jiva (individual soul), the world, and the Lord of the universe. This wisdom removes the distinctions of living and dead, soul and body, knower and known, and establishes a kind of non-dualistic pantheism, in which one universal Self, or God, is seen manifesting in all things as well as transcending all manifestation. The seekers of truth and aspirants for salvation must carry their consciousness above the levels of senses, mind and intellect. The saying of Vedanta cannot be grasped and understood merely on the basis of the literal meaning of the mantras and hair-splitting arguments, or by reason alone. The meaning of the word Brahman is hrihattama, or “the greatest.” Yet it is this Brahman that is the highest ideal of man’s intellectual consciousness and the object of investigation of all philosophical knowledge. The Upanishads declare that the Brahman exists both in visible as well as invisible forms, but the ultimate truth of life and of the world is Brahman alone.

The Upanishads speak of two ways of life: Preyas, the way of seeking pleasures, and Shreyas, the way of seeking the ultimate goal, the summum bonum of life. The two ways of life lead to different results. The way of seeking pleasures does lead to assorted transient pleasures, but pleasures are not the greatest good or the highest aim in life. One who chooses the way of pleasure misses the highest aim of life. It is the highest aim, the ultimate good that is the object of search in the Upanishads and Vedanta.

Introduction to the Ishopanishad

chapter 5

The Ishopanishad (Isa Upanishad) is considered to be the foundation stone of Upanishadic knowledge. There are only eighteen mantras (brief verses) in this short Upanishad. The study of these mantras reveals that this Upanishad is complete in itself, though other Upanishads similarly describe Vedanta philosophy in detail. The Ishopanishad forms the 40th chapter of the Kanva Shakha of the Yajurveda. After the initial invocation of peace we divide it into four portions, or padas, for the sake of explaining it to the sadhakas.

The first pada of the Ishopanishad consists of the first three mantras. They throw light on Brahman, the knowledge of Brahman, and the ways to obtain it. The first and the second mantras are so profound that the Gita seems only an elaboration of their message. This first pada gives the key to the art of living and the means of knowing the mysteries of life and death. Sincere and faithful observance of the instructions given in the first portion of this Upanishad gives one a glimpse of Brahman. From a practical point of view these instructions may be expressed in the following manner:

1. God is omnipresent.

2. Enjoying all the objects of the world with discrimination, we should have the feeling that all the things of the world belong to God alone and that we are given the right only to use them.
3. We should not cast a greedy eye on the wealth of anyone. We should not deprive anyone of his rights and possessions.
4. We should long to live only with the determination of performing our duties to the end of our lives. A man who remains unattached and performs duties without desire for rewards will not be bound to his actions.
5. All the duties of life are to be performed in the spirit of non-attachment. It is essential for man thus to perform his duties. Such performance of duties is the foremost means of gaining knowledge, and the first rung in the ladder of spiritual joy. Without it man cannot move forward another step.
6. We should never act against the dictates of our pure conscience.
7. One who acts against his conscience has to suffer in this world and other worlds after this life.

The second pada of this Upanishad begins with the fourth mantra and ends with the eighth mantra. These five mantras have described those principles of Brahavidya, the sacred knowledge which establishes the sadhaka (aspirant) in his own true self and makes him free from all evils and impurities.

The third pada of the Ishopanishad begins with the ninth mantra and ends with the sixteenth mantra. For those worthy of Upanishadic knowledge, it sets up methods to obtain knowledge of Brahman.

The fourth portion of this Upanishad consists of mantras seventeen and eighteen. These two mantras concern the art and science of death. They contain the secret of the prayers and petition of the sadhaka quitting this world, as we all must do.

This brief outline can only suggest the value of the important instructions and deep secrets contained in the Ishopanishad. The answer to all the important questions of life are to be found in this short Upanishad. It is an ideal book of Vedanta philosophy. Every sadhaka can succeed in obtaining his end by studying it and by following its ideals.

Ishavasyopanishad
Shanti-Patha
Invocation of Peace

chapter 6

Om Purnam-adah, Purnam-idam, Purnat Purnamu dachyate,
Purnasya, Purnam-adaya, Purnam-evavashishyate.
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

That Brahman, without attributes, and the highest God, is Perfect. The creation, having a form and full of many attributes is also Perfect, because only a Perfect can be born out of the Perfect. If the Perfect is taken out of the Perfect, what remains is also Perfect.

Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

Om is the first word of the Vedas. If we shut our mouth and try to utter any letter or word of any language within ourselves, nothing but the sound of Om will come out; Om is the only word which can be pronounced both with mouth open and mouth closed. The foundation stone of the whole Sanskrit language is the word Om. There is no other word like it. It's meaning has been very explicitly explained in the Mandukopanishad.

The word O, called Pranava Brahman, or God is a compound of the letters A, U and M. these three letters stand respectively for the three states of wakefulness, dreaming sleep, and deep dreamless sleep and for the corresponding gross, subtle and causal bodies. Yet there is a fourth part of Om, as the A, U and M, merge into silence. This represents a fourth state which can be experienced. It is above feelings and thoughts, a state of pure awareness where all activity ceases. This state is called Turiya (Turiyavastha). It cannot be described, it can only be realized in experience. To realize it is the supreme experience in life.

The four padas (parts) of Om may be described in the following manner also.

Padosya Vishva Bhutani tripad-asyamritam divi.
Tripad-urdhva udait purushah, padosyebhavad punah.

The Purushukta gives a description of all the four padas (parts) of Virat Purusha, the Grand Form of God. The first pada includes the creatures of the whole universe. The other three padas are full of the nectar of immortality; that is to say they are existence, consciousness and bliss beyond the realm of change and decay. The first pada is used in order to obtain the remaining three-this one pada which includes the whole universe is only one mantra. One mantra of Om indicates only one pada of Brahman, the Absolute Reality which includes the whole moving and unmoving world. **Pranava indicates God (Brahman with attributes)** and not Brahman without attributes. Om in itself is Brahman without attributes. The three padas: existence-consciousness-bliss, can be comprehended only by experience. Om contains the exposition of both the Karya Brahman and Karana Brahman and Pranava indicates only Karya Brahman. Pranava is also the Vachaka (name) of God. The unmanifest form of Brahman is beyond attributes, and therefore without name and form. In our universe cause and effect seem intertwined with each other; that which we call the veil of Maya (illusion) is confined to only one pada of Brahman which is this universe. Due to this basic ignorance we are unable to have a knowledge of the Absolute Brahman without any attributes. That is why all the pleasures of the world are imperfect; in other words whatever happiness we get in this world is only one-fourth of the whole joy of god. It is because of this that the pleasures of the world are incapable of giving full satisfaction to the Self of man. If together with worldly pleasures, we also realize existence-consciousness-bliss, the gain of perfect bliss will be everlasting. Perfect bliss is possible only by the under-mentioned knowledge of Om which is the subject of sadhana.

1. Ishavasyam-idam sarvam yat kinca jagatyam jagat,
Tena tyaktena bhunjitha ma gradhah kasya svid-dhanam.

Whatever moves in this world is enveloped by Isha. Enjoy it with renunciation; do not covet any man's wealth.

2. Kurvann-eveha karmani jijivishec-chatam samah,
Evan tvayi nanyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare.

Only through doing actions here, and in this way, one should desire to live a hundred years. There is no other way karma will not taint a man.

3. A surya nama te loka and hena tamasavrtah,
Tams-te pretyahhigacchanti ye ke catmahano janah.

Asurya is the name of worlds covered over with blind darkness; to them pass those who slay the Self.

The first mantra of Ishavasyopanishad begins with the word Isha, thus it is also called Ishopanishad (Isa Upanishad). **One who regulates and governs is called Isha**, the instrumental form of which is Isha. Being the regulator and governor of all, that **Supreme Power inherent in all the creatures is called Ishvara (God)**. The same Supreme Power resides in the heart of all living creatures and controls us. In order words, there is something in which we live, in which we are moved, in which we are. This something is as rarefied as space, and all-pervasive, and is called God. We all have our existence in this one God.

Careful reflection on the first mantra of Ishavasyopanishad gives an understanding of the aims as well as the duties of man's life. For example, since the same God is inherent in all, we should love every being. Yet the highest aim of a seeker is to see God, to realize Him. In this quest of God, man, first of all, needs certain important ideals in his practical life. The foremost ideal of a seeker should be to bring about the fullest development of the powers within him. The purpose of all the teaching is, for man, to develop his inner power to purify his antah karana (inner states) and practical life. Purity means freedom from all temptations or evils.

The first mantra of Ishopanishad gives an indication of certain human ideals and duties which, when accepted as principles and translated into action, bring man to the achievement of his purpose. The meaning of this mantra becomes clearer when we divide it into four parts.

The first part of the mantra, the expression "Ishavasyam idam sarvam jagatyam jagat," conveys the idea that this whole universe is immersed in God. Although the justice of God is equally distributed everywhere, we consider the human world to be better than

that of minerals, vegetables, and animals, due to man's higher intelligence and power of discrimination. Yet in the world of human beings we find everywhere the feeling of attachment which seems to bring us sometimes pain, sometimes pleasure. Do we not thus create a world of our own, over and above the world of God? We forget that God is omnipresent, that everything belongs to God, that we have nothing of our own. Ignoring this truth, we are so much attached to the world of our creation that in the flux of inevitable changes we consequently suffer intense pain and anxiety at the thought of separation from our imagined possessions. Nothing remains as it is today. The ever-blowing wing of change quickly transforms everything of this world. This is a law. The world is transient yet there is underlying the whole creation a power which is changeless.

We have seen that the first part of the first mantra of the Ishopanishad tells of this world, human life, and its ultimate end. The second part of the first mantra, the expression, "tena tyaktena bhunjitha," suggests a life of renunciation. This means to enjoy pleasure while giving up all attachment to them, and to face bravely every situation in life, whether pleasant or unpleasant, in the spirit of detachment. God is everywhere, and therefore there should be no room for fear in life.

The practice recommended in this mantra is to use and enjoy every object only as a means for higher achievement.

If pleasures remain something to be enjoyed merely for their own sake, we become selfishly attached to them. This not only demeans our character, but also sets us up for future suffering. This is the way of the bhogi, or hedonist. A yogi, on the other hand, will not allow pleasure to remain merely ends in themselves. Instead, with the detached feeling that nothing belongs to him but is offered only for use toward a higher end, he finds a way to use them for Yoga, realization of truth, or union with higher reality.

Nishkama karma, or action without desire for in itself, is made possible by selflessness and the feeling of oneness with all. Duties in the Indian way of life are based on the precept of atmava sarvabhuteshu, of treating all living beings as one's own self. The essence of this teaching is that we should neither be lost in worldly activity nor run away from the world. If we perform actions with vairagya, or dispassion, thus avoiding both attached pleasure seeking and running away, our purpose is served and life will be successful. Generally people think that vairagya consists in running away from the trouble of the world to live in caves and forests. This is only superficial. **True vairagya consists in being the master of the senses, in remaining uninvolved in the midst of pleasures, and emerging victorious and unsubdued in all the conditions of life.** Without detachment no one can enjoy a life of true happiness. He alone is happy who remains unattached from within, and is moving on the path of desireless actions in the spirit of oneness with all. Sadhana is concerned not only with the inner being, but also with control of the senses, and purity of conduct. With purification of conduct there comes purification in every other way.

The third part of the first mantra is the expression, "Ma grdhah," which means do not covet. Covetousness is a form of attachment. Attachment is deluded affection that takes

us far away from our purpose. Attachment can be overcome by constant practice of desireless action. This is a must for the yoga practitioner.

Our aim is freedom from sorrow and gaining the unchanging bliss. In order to achieve these ends we should keep in mind the following four things:

1. Remembrance of god (this gives power and strength).
2. Remembrance of duty (this makes for progress of our practical life).
3. Remembrance of the perishability of body (this reminds us of the fleeting nature of enjoyments and thus restrains attachment).
4. Remembrance of death (this maintains the attitude of detachment).

The fourth part of the Ishopanishad's first mantra is the expression "Kasya svidhanam," which means do not rob anyone of his wife, property or rights. If everyone follows these instructions, society will benefit materially, ethically, and spiritually.

The first mantra of the Ishopanishad throws light on all three angles of the triangle of life and serves as a guide to man's all-around development. Its ideals are worthy of our thoughtful consideration and practice: to see God in our own heart, to become pure in our actions, and always to feel that God is one and all pervading.

We have seen that the **essentials of the first mantra** are: see the same God in all and everywhere, perform actions and enjoy pleasures without attachment for the sake of sadhana, and do not deprive others of their rights through your own selfishness.

The second mantra is closely related to the first. It further elaborates the ideals of the first mantra, telling how a man should pass his life. The second mantra teaches, "Desire to live for a hundred years, but the usefulness of life does not lie in indolence and carelessness." By living a life of unattached action and performance of duties, a man can attain that end of mental calm and great peace for which his life is intended. By such a life, which is a life of sadhana, man is never blemished or shackled by his actions. Thus the second mantra concerns nishkama karma, or non-attached action.

No man can live without performing action. Consider the case of the sannyasi who has left his family for the ascetic life. He still has to perform duties necessary for his quest of moksha, or liberation. Self-study, Self-realization and religious discourse, too, are duties. Does any monk give up these actions? Thus everyone, whether a householder or a monk, has to perform duties. Without a knowledge of our duties and how to perform them, we cannot acquire the self-control necessary for the sake of social service and for gaining a knowledge of the spirit (atma tattva).

Therefore nishkama karma means performing out duties wisely by doing them gladly for others or the universal Self, without desire for personal reward. We should practice this sadhana for our whole life.

The **third mantra** teaches that those who indulge in immoral acts antagonistic to the true aim of their life, behaving as wicked, selfish and conceited persons, and those who are entirely given to physical and sensuous enjoyments are even now enveloped in or reborn into a dark known as that of asuras (demons). One who knows the spirit to be all-pervading, loves all without selfish interest, lives in this world like the sage king Janaka, transcends this world and becomes a jivanmukta, free from the bondage of life and death. But he who considers the infinite God to be finite and thinks the body to be his real self, can neither be a devotee of God, nor can perform action without hope for reward. Perfect knowledge is still far from his grasp.

There are two kinds of instructions in our Vedas and Upanishads, prescriptions and prohibitions. The pre-scriptions should be made our ideals. We should conduct our practical lives in observance of the prohibitions. When we infuse our lives with ideals by practice, we can understand and appreciate both types of instructions. **We find both recommendations and prohibitions in the three mantras** of the first part of the Ishopanishad. Let us now review them.

1. See God as all pervasive throughout the universe.
2. Do not develop attachment to the objects of pleasure in the world. Treat these objects only as a means for higher use.
3. Do not covet. Let there be no greed.
4. See wife, wealth and property as all belonging to God. Use them as means for realization God.
5. Always perform your duties, ever doing so with an attitude of disinterestedness, that is, without desire for personal reward. If a man wise to live a hundred years, he should live thus performing duties and going toward the supreme goal.
6. Always think, speak and act according to the dictates of conscience and the call of the higher Self.
7. Do not slay your higher Self by selfishness, sensuality and lack of sadhana, otherwise you will descend to lower states here and hereafter.

The second teaching of the first three mantras is “Do not develop attachment to the objects or pleasures in the world. Treat these objects only as a means for higher use.” Noteworthy here for the path of sadhana is that the Ishopanishad defines “piety” on the basis of love and desirelessness, and “**sin**” **on the basis of jealousy and selfishness**. Upanishadic scriptures say that man may perform all lawful actions, but only in the spirit of detachment.

The so-called pangs of death are what one suffers who runs after worldly enjoyments and who, deeply attached to the objects of the world, does not want to relinquish “his” possessions. **Death, in fact, is a pleasant thing;** but those who are ignorant of its secret and of the true art of life have to suffer acute pain on account of attachment. It is not death, but attachment that causes pain. Thus the thought of death is more painful than death itself.

Why shouldn't death be as natural as birth? In fact there are known to Yoga science, symptoms of approaching death that appear on the body months beforehand, just as there are indications of the hour of birth by movements of the fetus in the womb.

Death is inevitable and in it self-pleasant; that is why it occurs. Birth and death are necessary for every life.

The third teaching is "Do not covet; let there be no greed." Often seen on the path of sadhana as in ordinary life, is the tendency, when something obstructs our path, to start blaming fate, providence and god. When a trifle makes us grieved, we may turn our face against the right path. We do not try to understand that the cause of restlessness is most frequently our own greedy nature. That is why the sadhaka should remain aloof from greed and acquisitiveness.

The fourth teaching of the first three mantras of the Ishopanishad is "The wife, wealth and property as all belonging to God. Use them as means for realization of God." Great unhappiness flows from the attempt to protect our own wealth, rights and property and to seize that of others. The sadhaka should keep only so much in his possession as is needed for this life's journey toward the Supreme Goal.

The fifth teaching is "Always perform your duties, ever doing so with an attitude of disinterestedness, that is, without desire for personal reward. If a man wishes to live a hundred years, he should live thus performing duties and going toward the supreme goal." This mantra throws a challenge to seekers on all the ways, for it asserts that disinterested action is a pure, easy, and permitted path which may be, and ought to be, followed by all.

The sixth teaching of the first part of the Ishopanishad is "Always think, speak and act according to the dictates of conscience and the call of the higher Self. The voice of conscience is the voice of the higher Self. Action performed against conscience amount to self-murder. Such murder of the Self, or actions against conscience are forbidden. The soul in its very nature is pure, holy and untainted by any flaw or impurity. Though he knows it to be wrong, man acts against conscience due to his lack of self-discipline. Such behavior is self-delusion, for in this manner no one can improve his moral and spiritual character and attain the goal of life. Spiritual progress is only possible through self-discipline and sadhana. Conscience is the mainspring of character formation. Without character, man cannot get entry into the spiritual world.

The seventh teaching is "Do not slay your higher Self by selfishness, sensuality and lack of sadhana, otherwise you will descend to lower states here and hereafter. According to the third mantra of the first part of the Ishopanishad, they are demons who perform actions in an immoral, selfish and egotistical manner and have deep attachment to the enjoyment of the senses. By subduing their soul and suppressing the voice of conscience, they bring about their own downfall and find peace neither here in this world nor hereafter in other worlds.

Second Pada

chapter 8

4. Anejad-ekam manaso javiyo nainad-deva apnuvan purvam-arshat, Tad-dhavato' nyan-
atyeti that-tasminn-apo matarishva dadhati.

The Self is one and unmoving, swifter than the mind: the devas (the senses) cannot overtake It as It darts before them. Remaining motionless It passes the running ones. Through It the wind carries the clouds.

5. Tad-ejati tan-naijate tad-dure tad-antike,
Tad-antarasya sarvasya tad-u sarvasyasya bahyatah.

It moves and moves not. Far away, It is near. Within all, it is yet outside.

6. Yas tu sarvani bhutany-atmann-ewanupashyati,
Sarva-bhuteshu catmanam tato na vi jugupsate.

But he who sees all being in the Self and the Self in all beings ceases hatred.

7. Yasmint sarvani bhutany-atmaivabhud vijanatah,
Tatra ko mohah kah shoka ekatvam-anupashyatah.

When one realizes that all beings have become the Self, what further delusion and sorrow can there be for him who sees that oneness?

8. Sa paryagac-chukram-akayam-avranam-asnaviram shuddham-apapaviddham, Kavir
manishi paribhuh svayambhur yatha-tathyato 'rthan vyadadhac chashvatibhyah
samabhyah.

Pervading all, It is radiant and formless, flawless and indivisible, pure and unpierced by evil, all seeing and all-knowing, transcendent and self-existent. It oversees the karmas of all jivas forever.

The second pada, or part of the Ishopanishad consists of the above five mantras, numbered four through eight. **These mantras characterize Brahman, and show the identical nature of soul, or the Self in all beings and God.** The mantras characterize Brahman rather than give a full description, for a full description would be possible only by the attributes of Brahman, and these are beyond description. How then is knowledge of Brahman possible? This question, always in the heart of seekers, is answered very beautifully by the Upanishadic learning. Brahmagyana, or knowledge of Brahman, comes when man is exalted to a perfectly pure being beyond the merely animal and ordinary human categories. To reach the furthest evolved and most highly exalted state of humanity is to realize Brahman.

Concerning Brahman, this second pada of the Ishopanishad emphasizes several teachings.

1. Brahman, though immobile and changeless, is described as “faster than the mind” and “superseding others who are running” because It is pre-existent everywhere, or in other words omnipresent at all pervading.
2. The Brahman cannot be known by the senses because the senses are limited and can acquire a knowledge of the limited alone, and not of the infinite.
3. Brahman is the soul of all. The whole world is living on its life-giving force.
4. That Brahman gives mobility to all, but is never caught in motion. Whether objects in the world are in motion derive their mobility from the power and brilliance of Brahman. Brahman, the center on which everything else moves, is itself not in motion. Through Brahman’s will acting in the causal sphere, both the subtle and the gross, both energy and the grosser form of energy called matter, are moved.
5. Brahman is the nearest and the farthest. He is inside as well as outside all around us. He is in every object and in every place. Wise men see Him inside themselves; for them he is very near. Others, due to ignorance, regard Him to be far away.
6. The seeker who sees Brahman in all things and all objects, creatures, and the universe in Brahman is freed from attachment, hatred, and jealousy. He is filled with universal love, or the love of God. Such a man treats everybody as the temple of God and loves all, with no aversion for anyone. Here then is the fountainhead of universal brotherhood.

The seekers of Brahavidya should adopt sadhana to inculcate these teachings and practice awareness of the Self.

Those who seek divine knowledge need a practical system to follow, and one is suggested in the eighth mantra of this second part of the Ishopanishad. **The practical teachings of the eighth mantra**, full and very beautiful as they are, include the following.

1. In order to tread the path of divine knowledge the sadhaka should night and day imbibe the truth that Brahman exists everywhere. This feeling should find expression in thought, word, and deed. It should dominate his mind and heart.
2. Acquire the faith that Brahman is one, not many, and that all the activities of life are meant for Him. Acquiring purity of heart, of intellect, and of body, let whatever one does be the worship of the one Brahman.
3. Brahman is almighty, and a share of His power is hidden in the sadhaka himself. This hidden power should be aroused and discretely used for good purposes. It is awakened by tapas, or determined endurance of hardships and the trials of life while remaining firm in our path of directing sincere efforts to Self realization.

4. In order to be perfectly unaffected like Brahman, the sadhaka should give up the habit of identifying his Self with the body and assimilate into practical living the idea that to find or realize God is the all-important aim of life. To thus be purged of all evil is the first decisive victory of the sadhaka.
5. The seeker of Brahman should be thoughtful, and love wisdom and learning, which means too he will admire and seek virtue. The habits of disliking others and destructive criticism hinder sadhana, and should be eliminated.
6. As this Brahman-created universe is subordinate to Brahman, so man's creation-the world of his affections and selfish attachments-should be subordinated to the divine part of man, his true Self, Man must be the master of his worldly relationship, not their victim. A man who masters his selfish attachments and treats worldly relationships as means to higher ends is liberated from all miseries. But to be lost in worldly relationships and false attachments, considering them to be the ultimate aim of life, is nothing short of death.

To Cultivate in ourselves the divine qualities, like those of Brahman, we should root them in our antahkarana with faith and confidence, and never act or think contrary to them. Then the mind will acquire these qualities. This is accomplished by japa, which is mental repetition of certain phrases and syllables called mantras. The mind of the sadhaka is molded according to the idea of the mantra he mentally repeats. The sadhaka, building a temple of thought in his heart, should repeat the mantra, paying more attention to its meaning and essential feeling than to mere words. This repetition of meaning and feeling causes the uncontrolled tendencies of the mind to vanish, just as light banishes darkness. Japa also produces sound and rhythm which assumes a shape of its own. When the ideas and qualities of the mantra automatically occupy his heart, the inner being of the sadhaka assumes a shape in accordance with the mantra. The inner being of this shape is called the etherial body of some sadhakas. It is through such an etherial body that yogis teach and inspire the sadhakas living in distant countries, and also remove the impediments in the way of their sadhana. Japa is very intimately related with mind and breathing. The sadhaka should therefore practice japa diligently to make his body, mind, and breathing worthy of sadhana. The seeker of the supreme goal must train himself to give up indolence and meditate at the appointed time every day. He should practice pranayama, or prescribed breathing exercise, at least emptying his lungs and filling them with fresh air two or three times a day. He should keep the body healthy and purify sense activity. Breathing, meditation and worship concentrate and purify the mind.

The seeker should concentrate his mind through meditation, divesting it of passion and desire. Then one can go beyond the waking state, in which the mind flows outwards and works through the organs of sense perception. One must first control this outgoing tendency of the mind by turning it inwards. When the mind flows inwards, it may weave a world of its own without the aid of the gross sense organs, but this too must be controlled for it is only a dream state. One may then enter a state which resembles dreamless sleep. Yet one must go beyond. The yogi, proceeding through higher processes

in meditation, may one day reach turiya, or the fourth state beyond the state like dreamless sleep.

This is the state of mind where there is no finite mind at all. The finite mind is totally eradicated by immersion and merging into ultimate reality, the self-luminous pure consciousness, being and bliss that is Brahman. The mind alone divides the sadhaka from this, which is God.

Turning the mind away from objects of pleasure and toward the soul, one attains the state described in the seventh mantra: in that state of perfect abidance in Brahman, when to the yogi fully immersed and equipoised in the Self the whole universe appears as God, what sorrow and physical attachment can there be for one who views everything with equality?

Third Pada

chapter 9

1. Andham tamah pravishanti ye'vidyam-upasate,
Tato bhuya iva te tamo ya u vidyayam ratah.

Those devoted to illusion enter blind darkness.
Into greater darkness enter those who are solely attached to knowledge.

2. Anyad-evahur vidyayanyad-ahur-avidyaya,
Iti shushruma dhiranam ye nas tad vicacakshire.

One thing is obtained from knowledge, another from illusion.
Thus we have heard from the wise who have taught us.

3. Vidyam cavidyam ca yas tad vedobhayam sa ha,
Avidyaya mrtyum tirtva vidyaya mrtam-ashnute.

Knowledge and illusion, he who knows both overcomes death through illusion and through knowledge enjoys immortality.

4. Andham tamah pravishanti ye'sambhutim-upasate,
Tato bhuya iva te tamo ya u sambhutyam ratah.

Those devoted to manifest nature enter blind darkness.
Into greater darkness enter those attached to unmanifest nature (prakrti).

5. Anyad-evahuh sambhavad-anyad-ahur-asambhavad,
Iti shushruma dhiranam ye nas tad vicacakshire.

One thing is obtained from manifest nature, another from unmanifest nature.
Thus we have heard from the wise who have taught us.

6. Sambhutim ca vinasham ca yas vedohhayam sa ha,
Vinashena mrtyum tirtva sambhutyamrtam-ashnute.

Nature manifest and unmanifest, he who knows both overcomes death through unmanifest nature and through manifest nature and through manifest nature enjoys immortality.

7. Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham,
Tattvam pushann-apavrnū satya-dharmaya drshtaye.

The face of truth is covered with a golden veil.
Uncover that reality, Pushan, to the glance of one devoted to Truth.

8. Pushann-ekarshe yama surya prajapatya vyuha rashmint samuha tejo yat te rupam
kalyanatamam tat te pashyami, Yo' sav-asau purushah so 'ham-asmi.

O Nourisher, One Rishi, Controller, Sun, Progenitor, gather your rays, restrain your splendor, so that I may see that aspect of yours which is most holy. The person who is called "That," "That" he I am.

The third pada of the Ishopanishad consists of mantras nine through sixteen. For now, let us consider nine through fourteen, as listed above. These six mantras deal with the secrets of spiritual knowledge (vidya) and spiritual ignorance (avidya), knowledge of truth (vidya) and illusion (maya), as well as Brahman and nature (prakrti).

Though the attributes of soul or the real Self are beyond description or thought, our scriptures and philosophies have a way of giving an understanding of its nature. It is by arundhatinyaya, or proceeding from the gross to the subtle, then to the still more subtle, and so on. **It is like the Indian custom of showing the star Arundhati to a young bride.** They first show her the Saptarshi (Big Dipper) stars and the pole star because only then she gets accustomed to see Arundhati, a very, very small star. Similarly, the scriptures lead the sadhaka from the gross to the subtle, and then to the subtlest self. This is how the sages show the way to Self-realization. First the sadhaka is to recognize avidya, or all that which does not lead to Self-realization. Then he must know the lower vidya, or spiritual knowledge comprehensible by mind and speech. Then finally he finds Self-realization, the supreme vidya, which is beyond mind and speech.

Avidya is spiritual ignorance. It includes that knowledge that does not lead to Self-realization. The ninth mantra compares avidya to darkness, and says that those who pursue knowledge and do not understand avidya go to greater darkness. Avidya means considering the perishable body and objects of the world to be the Self. The power of the body is also known as deep darkness. One who knows does not regard the body as his real Self, but an ignorant man considers the material body to be his true nature.

From avidya, the sadhaka is led to knowledge, which is of two kinds. First he is led to **apara knowledge**. This means knowledge which is not supreme and which is

communicable by speech, and thus includes an intellectual knowledge of the shrutis, or scriptures. Next the sadhaka is led to **para knowledge**. This means the supreme knowledge as experienced, which cannot be expressed or communicated. Para knowledge is the underlying essence of the scriptures, and must be experienced to be understood. Thus from avidya, the sadhaka is advised to go first to the lower vidya and then to the supreme vidya.

Some sadhakas waste life's valuable time in conflict over whether karma (the path of action) or bhakti (the path of devotion) or jnana (the path of knowledge) is superior. **Knowledge, action and devotion are all compulsory for sadhana.**

Higher knowledge is an achievement which depends on direct experience, and this experience is possible by the sadhana of ridding the mind of illusion, indolence, etc. thus the mantras of this part of the Ishopanishad contain the excellent counsel that the sadhaka should keep himself aloof from the misconceptions caused by sectarian controversies of dvaitya and advaitya, or dualism and monism. In reality, these views describe different stages of sadhana.

Through an understanding of avidya the sadhaka will surely be attracted to knowledge. He can then learn the path better, and embark upon it. By endurance, self-study and worship of God, knowledge can be gained. Going along the path is somewhat like climbing a ladder to the sky, where no matter how long the ladder and how energetic the climber, he can never reach the sky. Yet this only means that God is not finite, his infinity is in the grossest of the gross and in the subtlest of the subtle. God can be found in the inmost heart of the sadhaka's own body, when the depth of understanding is fully developed and definite practices presented by the sages are followed.

According to the eleventh mantra, he who knows avidya and vidya both at once overcomes death by his knowledge of avidya and gains immortality through his knowledge of vidya. In this mantra, knowledge of both avidya and vidya is considered necessary.

One thing worthy of particular attention in the former mantras is that those who have only partial knowledge, who forget the aim of life and mind only their worldly activity do remain in darkness, but those who want to gain merely knowledge and are not willing to know the secret of action go to even greater darkness. Neither knowledge nor action is perfect in itself. Understanding of both is necessary.

Mantras twelve, thirteen and fourteen of the third part of the Ishopanishad concern manifest Brahman (Sambhuti) and the unmanifest Brahman (Asambhuti, called Vinasha in the fourteen mantra). So that we may ourselves experience the mysteries of manifest and unmanifest Brahman, let us now search for the way to enter our temple of sadhana.

We gain knowledge of manifest and unmanifest Brahman through our gross, subtle and causal bodies. The gross physical body is a tool in the hands of the subtle body, which is also called by the name of antahkarana, or inner being. This antahkarana, or **subtle body**,

comprises four functions, namely manas (mind), citta (consciousness, including the storehouse of impressions from past experiences), ahamkara (ego) and buddhi (the faculty of discrimination). The gross body, acting under the direction of the subtle body, establishes contact with the physical sense world of sensual pleasures. Those who are lost only in the development of the gross body are certainly in darkness because they can enjoy that gross body and its pleasures only for a brief period. All the pleasures have a momentary attraction and are dear only in the beginning. But they do not tend to the good of man and cannot make a man realize the aim of life. At best, the development of the gross body can give us physical strength and physical progress. Other progress and awareness comes through the development of the subtle body.

A further analysis of the **subtle body** excluding the causal, **reveals seventeen constituents**. There are the five organs of sense perception; then the five tanmatras, namely hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell, which are subtle qualities of the five elements; also the five vital energies (pranas) namely prana, apana, vyana, samana and udana related respectively to respiration excretion, digestion, circulation and coughing; plus the mind (manas) and intellect (buddhi). The antahkarana is purified by meditation and worship, and thus the subtle body progresses. The sadhaka who has a clean, pure and developed antahkarana and whose mind is pure and concentrated, turns inward to his heart for experience of Brahman.

The **causal body is a body of acquired tendencies**. It contains the record of actions previously performed, including those of other lifetimes. Only when the causal body is developed and purified can love for god blossom in the heart. Only he who develops and makes exalted all three bodies, the gross, subtle and causal, becomes a successful yogi. If a sadhaka wants to develop only the causal body and fails to develop the gross and subtle bodies, his attempt will not be successful. He will be like a blind and lame person who staggers here and there in darkness. Without the development of gross and subtle bodies, no development of the causal body is possible.

Thus man has three “bodies” relevant to his sadhana. This same fact is sometimes described somewhat differently as the five “sheaths” which we will return to later. These are just two ways of talking about what is fundamentally the same thing.

What is important is that the gross, subtle and causal bodies are related to different states of consciousness described in the Upanishads. Jagrati is the wakeful state. Svapna is the dream state. Sushupti is the state of deep dreamless sleep. During the wakeful state, the relation with gross, subtle and causal bodies is maintained. During the dreamless state of deep sleep the relation with the subtle and causal bodies too is dropped. Who does not like the state of very, very deep sleep?

If we cross over all three states, wakeful, dreaming and dreamless sleep, we reach the fourth state, called turiya. This state of liberation is the state of everlasting joy. In it we are absolutely free of life’s most painful fear-the fear of death, for our consciousness is beyond the bodies subject to death. The state is Self-realization, the same as knowledge of Brahman.

These various states are described very beautifully in the Mandukya Upanishad. The common man experiences only the wakeful, dreaming and dreamless sleep states. But the fourth state is realized through sadhana.

One way of sadhana is realization through the five sheaths. Sheath here means covering. As a sword is covered by a sheath, so the **atman or true Self is covered by five sheaths** that envelop it. The absolute, pure consciousness that is the Self is also the unmanifest Brahman, while its first thin covering, called the causal body or the sheath of bliss, is part of the manifest Brahman. We are discussing how, in sadhana, to experience for ourselves the mysteries of the manifest and unmanifest Brahman.

The first thin curtain or sheath around the pure Self is anandamaya kosha the sheath of bliss. It is citta, or consciousness as the subtlest possible manifestation. Even in its bliss, it is an impurity covering the true Self, yet it expresses the unenveloped and infinite even though enveloped and finite. It is this sheath which is called the causal body. Over the thin covering called the sheath of bliss is the second covering called vijñanamaya kosha. This is the sheath of discriminatory knowledge and experience (buddhi) as well as ego-consciousness (ahamkara). In its obscuring rather than discriminating function, it makes the soul, which is neither the doer or the sufferer of actions, appear as performing action and suffering the fruits of actions.

The third covering is manomaya kosha, the mental sheath colored with the vitiations of mind (manas) and organs of sense perception. It creates doubts and illusions. It is a thick covering on top of the other possibilities for misidentifying the real Self.

The fourth covering is pranamaya kosha, the vital sheath “made of prana.” It produces the vibrations of vital force (related to breath) and the senses. Because this vital sheath has the power of activity and motion, it enables the invisible and motionless soul to be misidentified as something visible and moving.

The fifth and grossest covering is annamaya kosha, the physical sheath which is made of food, blood, semen, etc. when this sheath is mistaken for the Self, the indivisible ageless, and immortal Self is thought to be divided and subject to birth, old age and death.

Another way of sadhana concerns the control of the vital forces which connect the gross and subtle bodies. This connection is maintained by the thread of breath. Through the sadhana of pranayama the connection between the gross and subtle body may be easily severed. But it should be learned and followed only under the guidance of an adept master. Yet as stated earlier, the ordinary deep breathing of pranayama should be adopted by all.

The third way of sadhana may be stated thus: if one finds oneself unworthy of any of these two ways of sadhana, one should minimize one’s desires so much as to eliminate them. If there are no desires, there would be nothing to feel sorry for. But this sadhana also requires a high degree of non-attachment.

Devotion is the fourth method of sadhana. The control of the senses through regulated life and filling the heart and mind with divine love purifies and restrains the mind. Love of God is a feeling and the mind should be absorbed in that feeling which is contained in the mantras. By japa, repetition of mantra, the mind also becomes one pointed and is lost in the experience of God. The longings and the separations of the world grow faint for the meditator. Attachment is, of itself, thrown off. The sadhana of love is a peculiar sadhana. If the sadhaka succeeds in securing even a drop of divine love, he becomes immortal soul, grants him sayuju-mukti, salvation by the merger of individual soul into God.

Fourth Pada

chapter 10

9. Vayu-anilam-amrtam-athedam bhasmantam shariram,
Om Krato smara krtam smara krato smara krtam smara.

Now let my breath return to immortal Prana, and my body to ashes. Remember, O mind, remember Om, and remember my deeds. Remember my deeds.

10. Agne naya supatha raye asman vishvani deva vayunani vidvan, Yuyodhy-asmaj
juhuranam-eno bhuyishtham te nama uktim vidhema.

Agni, lead me by the good path to the fruits of my actions. Deva, you know all deeds. Remove me from the fault of deceit. I offer words of devotion to you.

The seventeenth mantra speaks of one important thing, namely, that the sadhaka should practice enough sadhana in his life so as to be able to remember at death the highest name of God, OM, with his heart free from all passion. If it is not so his dense of identification with the body and the attachments and affections of the world will bring him pain. The following three instructions of the mantra must be born in mind!

1. This body is subject to death and decay. Do not identify the self with the body. Perform actions, but remain unattached to them.

2. Always remember OM.

3. Call back to your mind the actions performed by you in the past. It is natural at the time of death to recall both the good and the bad actions performed in the past. Those who do not perform bad actions, always remember God by their benevolent thoughts.

The teachings of the Upanishads deal with a number of sadhanas to modify one's life. These principles are capable of completely altering the life of a sadhaka and placing him in the category of divine human beings. Man has been given full freedom by God to perform his duties and actions. He enjoys this freedom of action in this world from birth to death. This freedom lasts for the whole of life, but when in the last moments this masterhood and these rights are snatched away, a man grows weak and helpless. The

teaching is that for the sake of gaining strength at this time, a man must work for the whole of his life dedicating his mind and intellect to Brahman. No obligation can be perfectly performed without this dedication of mind and intellect to God. It is good to keep one's conduct and thoughts pure. We should always remember OM. It is only the thoughts of God which benefits us in the end; attachment to all other things is painful and unreal. Who will be your support when all rights are snatched away on the deathbed? Only mindfulness of OM can remove this painfulness.

A person who is free from all longings, feels great happiness even on his deathbed. But those who have only selfishly enjoyed the pleasure of this world for the whole of their lives and who never knew the art of inspired detached action, innate tendencies and attachments of their lives appear before them. It is a period of intense painfulness.

In the eighteenth mantra of the Ishopanishad there is an expression of the last desire of the sadhaka on his deathbed. His desire is that God should carry him through the right, pleasant path which is called agni-marga, the path of fire. After departing from this body man has to pass through one of two different paths: supatha and kupatha-the good path or the bad path. Death means separation from this gross body. Quite different from this gross body there is a subtle body also which is made of mind, intellect and ego. This subtle body remains even after separation from the gross body.

There is a prayer in this mantra to carry the jiva (soul) through the path of fire. It is quite proper to make this prayer. There are only two paths-one is the path of avidya (ignorance) full of darkness; the other is the path of vidya (knowledge) full of light. The word agni (fire) means agrenaya-that which leads the way of knowledge and light. Light and knowledge are foremost in the life of a sadhaka. Here the word fire should not be taken in the narrow sense. It is folly to worship fire, which is immanent everywhere, as merely something confined to the fire of an oven. **The word fire has been used in this mantra in the sense of light and knowledge.** Brahman is of the nature of light. It is He who is our first master and father. The fire that exists in all of us has originated from Him. He who gains this knowledge wears the crown of victory in his life. At the time of leaving this world and life, he is not tortured by attachment and conflicts of mind. This mantra speaks of the washing away of all sins and sorrows. These two paths have also been described as uttarayana path and dakshinayana path the northern and southern paths. Those who practice Yoga can understand this distinction very well. There are two different paths in Yoga sadhana-the path of sun and the path of moon. The path of sun is meant for ascetics and the path of moon is meant for pleasure-seekers. The path of sushumna is the middle path-the path of balance. We should choose our path and start on that path at once. Otherwise, when there is life, we have no discrimination; when discrimination comes, life is exhausted. Nevertheless, we should now start making proper use of our lives, the moment for awakening is upon us.

The Ishopanishad begins with the word Isha (God) and ends with the word agni (fire), the word-pervading power. Both terms mean the same thing. This world, too, is born out of Brahman and is then absorbed back into Brahman again. The mantras of the Ishopanishad contain the exposition of both ends of the life cycle and teach us the necessity of moving

forward on the path of the detached performance of duty. Everyone should bring these teachings into practice.

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih

Long Live Sanatan Dharam
August 2003

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